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Dissemination Authorized  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

21 May 1951

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Copy No. 25

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Document No.	8
No Change In Class.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Declassified	
Class. Changed To:	TS S C
Auth.:	HR 70-2
Date:	20 July 78
By:	[Redacted]

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Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Intelligence Memorandum

Subject: Western European Attitudes Toward Defense Against Soviet Aggression.

1. Need for a Reassessment

In a recent statement to the press, the Belgian leader Paul-Henri Spaak deplored the anti-US sentiment that is growing in certain European circles and stated that a clarification of US-European relations was necessary in order to produce a more friendly and equal cooperation between an independent Europe and the US. Spaak considers criticism of the US unwarranted, but the fact that he felt called upon to make such a demand suggests the need for a reassessment of Western European attitudes toward plans for defense against possible Soviet aggression.

2. The General Situation

The proximity of each continental Western European country to the USSR provides a rough gauge of the extent to which it supports its defense program and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Norway strongly backs its defense commitments under the NATO. While support in the Benelux countries is less unanimous, all non-Communist elements in these countries are convinced of the need for strengthened national defense, and the trend is toward expanded defense programs. In Denmark, most national groups support the NATO, but a residual feeling of futility is undermining public support for Denmark's NATO commitment. Recent reports indicate that rearmament is viewed with increasing favor in Germany, although the lack of a definite government program hampers a clear-cut delineation of opinion. Although Sweden has not joined NATO, its people strongly back its defense program.

In France, the government's increasing impatience with US pressure for the fulfillment of the conditions attached to US military aid and a growing desire for a popular mandate regarding French rearmament give cause for doubts concerning the extent to which the French people support their defense effort and NATO arrangements. The Italians are beginning to see more clearly the dangers of a Soviet invasion and, therefore, support for rearmament is increasing slowly. The UK is more defense-conscious because of its extensive global responsibilities and, by and large, the UK public has gone along with the government's commitments under the NATO, although there have been sporadic outbursts of irritation against US leadership. Portugal and Spain consider themselves remote enough to be able to measure their military commitments to the West by their limited domestic economic capacities. Because of the nature of the Spanish dictatorship, Spain's military budget is disproportionately large.

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Switzerland, like Sweden, maintains a strong defense program independent of the NATO, but one that is adequate only for self-defense.

### 3. Popular Attitudes

Although the governments of most of the NATO countries are firmly committed to the common defense program, popular opinion is still largely apathetic. The Norwegians and the British have strongly endorsed the NATO program, but on the continent generally there exists no adequate appreciation of the necessity for an urgent and sustained common defense effort. In addition, this latent unwillingness to prepare against aggression is reinforced, in France at least, by mounting distrust of US aims and leadership. Resentment against the presence of US military forces in France and apprehension over the destruction in Korea have fostered this sentiment and strengthened the general conviction that occupation is preferable to devastation.

### 4. Economic Groups

On the continent, the opinion of labor leaders toward a stepped-up defense program is divided along political lines. This is particularly true in France and Italy, where the dominant Communist unions oppose rearmament. Non-Communist union leaders have generally pledged support for the defense program, while, at the same time, expressing much concern over the inflation they believe it will bring. Except in Scandinavia where labor follows its leaders in support of the defense effort, the majority sentiment of the labor rank and file probably ranges from indifference to hostility, and is affected primarily by the wage-price ratio.

Big business and industrial interests are continuing to give strong support to the defense effort, because of their desire to reverse the deflationary trend of 1949 and their hope for greater profits. In Italy, however, there are indications that at least small business, which fears that it will be squeezed out under the pressure of the rearmament program, gives little support to the defense effort. In France, there is now a tendency to blame most of the inflation on speculation and US stockpiling and to subordinate the defense emergency to concern over Europe's share of the world's raw materials and the possible effects of a US-directed rationing program upon European civilian production.

### 5. The Military

In general, military groups in NATO countries strongly support the plan for common defense, although the Portuguese, because of their distrust of French defense capabilities and because of Portugal's relatively remote location, want to limit their military contribution to a commitment to defend their national bases. For similar reasons, Spanish military leaders prefer an alignment with Portugal and the US, although

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they might eventually consider providing a contingent for NATO, if US funds are forthcoming. Although Sweden adheres to the Swiss-type policy of neutrality that commits it to go to war only if attacked, the Swedish military would prefer to see their country incorporated in the NATO. Individual misgivings and jealousies resulting from the selection of command positions and bases have begun to cause some concern, particularly in France and the UK.

#### 6. Political Parties

The middle-of-the-road political groups that control the governments in most of the Western European countries are generally agreed on the necessity for a strong common defense effort. The more conservative minority groups, such as the Gaullists in France and the Italian Monarchists, are calling for a much greater effort on the part of their respective countries, partly for reasons of national pride and partly because they fear US domination of NATO defense arrangements. In Portugal, on the other hand, the government is anxious to avoid hasty defense efforts which would hamper economic reconstruction. Although in general the Socialist parties of Western Europe have expressed wide-spread fear of the effect that military expenditures might have on the standard of living, in most of the countries in question they are strongly behind the defense effort -- with the notable exception of the West German Social Democrats. In Scandinavia, the Socialists, who dominate the political and labor scenes, have strongly supported rearmament ever since the inception of the NATO. In the Netherlands, the Socialists have finally decided to sacrifice social legislation to defense measures, but Socialists of other Benelux countries continue to oppose the defense programs of their respective countries, largely because of domestic political considerations. The precariousness of the Spanish economy precludes any early increase in Spain's independent military expenditures, which at present amount to 40 percent of the national budget.

Communist and fellow-traveller opposition to defense against Soviet aggression is officially non-existent in the Iberian peninsula, ineffectual in Scandinavia, the UK and the Benelux countries, fairly strong in West Germany and a force to be reckoned with in Italy and France. Paralleling many Communist arguments are the views of the "neutralists" -- small groups exerting influence considerably out of proportion to their numerical strength and particularly strong in Germany and France. Some of the "neutralist" groups in Germany are probably Communist-supported, but in France a number of small vociferous cliques seem to remain politically independent, while proclaiming every shade of "neutralism" from pacifism to the recently reported "neo-neutralism." (The latter may be viewed either as a recrudescence of De Gaulle's postwar international "third force" idea or merely the natural evolution of nationalism.) Although "neutralism" in France is not a full-fledged movement, it has received much impetus from the prominence of some of its proponents. France's most influential paper, the independent Le Monde has championed

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the "neutralist" cause, and the pro-government Figaro has also on occasion printed contributions that could be considered harmful to the defense effort. Elsewhere, the political press follows party lines and independent papers usually favor the defense effort.

#### Conclusion

The anti-US sentiment that Spaak decried is probably based largely on economic factors. Many Europeans are undoubtedly deeply concerned lest Far Eastern developments involve Europe immediately in another world war, but many are also beginning to discover more fearful spectres closer to home. The persistent fear of lower living standards finds almost certain confirmation in the growing scarcity and the mounting prices of the raw materials that are essential to defense. In France, the cost of living has already advanced 25 percent since the Korean War began. In Denmark, the people tend to place the blame for much of their economic difficulties on the armament effort. Anticipated reductions for welfare expenditures in the UK have already caused a crisis in the Cabinet, and there will continue to be considerable criticism of the implementation of the arms program, although there is as yet little indication of the trade union reaction to the inevitable reductions in living standards. In Italy, some of the more conservative Christian Democrats, such as Budget Minister Pella, fear that the rearmament effort may bring on inflation, and the Senate has postponed consideration of the rearmament program. Thus, to varying degrees throughout Europe, the basic question of the impact of rearmament on the cost of living is leading to a reassessment of each nation's attitude toward the common defense effort.

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